



Executive Director's Briefing to the CPR

Agenda Item 4

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BRIEFING BY DR. JOAN CLOS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UN-HABITAT

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Delegates, it's an honour to share with you my briefing which contains the main activities that myself and the Deputy Executive Director have done in the last month since the last CPR.

I would like to focus my presentation on the Habitat III Conference because it is the most relevant event that we have had in this period. I would like to thank the Member States for your very valuable contribution to the successful outcome of Habitat III.

Habitat III has been a very important conference in the scenario of the United Nations, and it has been considered the most attended conference in the history of the United Nations with 45000 people registered, 33000 people officially in the venue, and about 120000-130000 in Quito in the different events including the ones outside the venue, which included the Habitat Village and the different premises that the Government of Ecuador provided for delegations to organize events outside the official conference venue.

That represent a huge attendance and a real mobilization of people and I want of course to give my thanks to Ecuador, because it was a very complex and difficult meeting in Quito but it came out as a very important success, and President Correa recognized the relevance of this conference.

I would also like to thank all the people who have worked in the preparation of the outcome document of Habitat III. As you may remember, we had a strategy in the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) of aiming to reach an agreement through the process of the meetings of the PrepCom well before the celebration of the conference, which would enable a focus in Quito on the substantive issues of the New Urban Agenda.

This was possible, mainly because in the third meeting of the preparatory committee in Surabaya, the Member States did very big effort to finish the resolution. In Surabaya, most of the content of the New Urban Agenda was agreed, and the only thing that was pending was the second part of the resolution which addressed the role of UN-Habitat in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

The role of UN-Habitat in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda was further debated in the informal meetings that took place in New York in September. I would also like to give my appreciation and recognition to Member States and delegates that were participating in these informal meetings in New York under the guidance of the co-facilitators, which completed the full agreement of the text to be approved in Quito. It was outstanding, and has been commented on in many places. The last session of the debate took 35 hours of continuous negotiations

without a break. That represented a huge effort, perhaps recognizing of the issues and the relevance of the questions at stake.

Thanks to all these efforts it was possible to reach Quito with an agreed text and, therefore, the substantive aspects of the New Urban Agenda could be fully debated. The parallel sessions and the parallel events were outstanding. I remember seeing many of you in different positions represented in the events and the presence of many high level representatives of Member States.

The delegates were numerous in many countries, also recognizing of the role that urbanization is playing in the modern world. I think that it is important to recognize the Second Assembly of mayors and local authorities that took place the day before the opening of the conference and had more than 2000 local authority representatives sharing their opinions in a very substantive manner to establish a dialogue between Member States and local authorities.

The capacity of stakeholders was very important, who organized themselves through the General Assembly of Partners including 9 Major Groups of United Nations stakeholders amplified this number including 7 more groups which are well-structured under the platform of the General Assembly of Partners which facilitated a very deep engagement of stakeholders in the process of dialogues with partners.

The two sessions that took place in New York, one related to partners and the other dedicated to local authorities, both attended by many Member States, were also a very important point in facilitating the dialogue.

The New Urban Agenda represents a change of direction in the pronouncements and considerations about urbanization. The most evident capture that we can get from the New Urban Agenda is, first, a consideration by Member States that Urbanization is becoming a strategic issue. In the period from the 1996 Habitat II and the 2016 Habitat III, we have witnessed two big global crises that have been related to urbanization. One of those was the subprime crisis that initiated in the United States and extended to all the world economy related to the regulated market of mortgages of housing especially the ones dedicated to pro-poor housing, expressing that lack of attention to these kinds of issues can explode later on to a crisis that can have big repercussions.

The other crisis in the global scenario was the Arab spring, where there was an urban uprising of unemployed youth in the cities of the region, and from this we are still witnessing the consequences today. And we can probably add some additional aspects related to urbanization like the migration crisis in Europe, as well as the proliferation of terrorism in some areas and cities of the world, usually related to capture of voluntaries for these kinds of activities from difficult neighbourhoods in many parts of the world.

Therefore, there is now a growing recognition that solving problems of urbanization can easily contribute to strategic aspects of peace, security and, of course, development in the world.

The second important point that the New Urban Agenda has generated is the recognition of the positive linkage between urbanization and development. Many countries have in the last 20 years since Habitat II demonstrated that well-directed urban policy can give positive results in terms of accelerating the economies and prosperity. We have seen a lot in China, which has in the last 20 years evolved their economy through urbanization, which has many positive results. When we consider the Millennium Development Goals and achievements in reducing poverty of the world, the achievements have been associated to these change in China, and not only in China, but also many other governments have demonstrated that a well-managed process of urbanization can lead to positive results. For example, to mention an African country, Morocco has sustained its role in the process of Urbanization which includes Public Housing, which has boosted the construction sector and has proved that a well-directed process of Urbanization can have very positive outcome for the well-being of the people and the alleviation of poverty.

This approach of the New Urban Agenda towards the positive aspects of Urbanization, that urbanization is a lever of development, helps to focus the decision-making process in terms of what to do when you have very scarce resources, how to prioritize the investment in urbanization, which things to be prioritized in order to guarantee that urbanization yields the most in circumstances of scarcity of resources. This is something that is opening a new urban agenda, in the sense that the Agenda is mirrored in these two basic principles; the strategic relevance of urbanization and the contribution of urbanization to leverage development.

Out of this framework, there is going to be an opportunity for Member States to develop the strategies for the following years where, learning from the successful experiences, we can profit from a better urbanization that contributes to development in the parts of the world that are in need of accelerating their development.

The New Urban Agenda is also very connected with the main Agendas of the United Nations, not just regarding development, but also Climate Change, Risk Reduction and Resilience – the Sendai Conference - and all the main debates that have taken place in the United Nations in the last two years. I would like to single out migration, the conference which took place in New York on the 18th of September; humanitarian interventions, the conference that was held in Istanbul and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for financing development. In that sense, the New Urban Agenda is fully integrated and coherently related to the work of the United Nations.

UN-Habitat, as a focal point as has been assigned in the agreement, is focusing the work on the framework of implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and we hope that the Governing Council of UN-Habitat will play an important role in developing the main aspects of the work that we have in front of us.

As you know, we have proposed to Member States that we celebrate the Governing Council in May, not in April as has been the tradition, which means that we will have around six months to prepare the Governing Council, and in the preparations we may address the main issues that are

tasked for decision there. That includes not only Programme and Budget, but also the revision of the Strategic Plan which is important now after Habitat III.

At the same time, the Assessment that is agreed in the resolution of Habitat III is going to take place during this period. I have already had conversations with the teams of the current Secretary-General and the Secretary-General elect and they are teaming together to put in place the recommendations of the resolutions to the Secretary-General.

I have also had a conversation with the President of the General Assembly, and he has agreed to celebrate the High-Level meeting that is proposed in the resolution in the first week of September next year, just at the end of the 71st Session of the General Assembly, in order to give time to the celebration of the Governing Council and to the finishing of the Assessment that is going to be put in place by the Secretary-General immediately.

That places our activities in the next months in a very hectic agenda which will require the support and the work of the Member States of the Governing Council and also of all the General Assembly of the United Nations. Next year in December the provision is that the results of the Assessment presented at the High-Level meeting in the first week of September will be tabled before the Second Committee and will be considered in its proceedings at the beginning of the 72nd Session of the General Assembly. Hence, in the next 12 months we will be engaged in work that will require the contribution of all of us.

I already thank all of you for the work done and also for the work that we are going to do together in the next month.

As you know we have also initiated a process of engagement with Member States to ask for voluntary contributions to help the financing of the core budget of UN-Habitat during the period of Assessment and in the implementation that is going to take place. We are requesting all the Member States for extraordinary contributions to the UN-Habitat programme in order to bridge 2016, 2017 and the part of 2018 that will be under the current model of financing of UN-Habitat.

This is an effort that we have done with all the Member States and some of you have already responded with analysis and requested for additional information that we are very pleased to continue to provide in order to bridge this period from now to 2018. I will refer with more details, if you allow me, on this financial aspect on the point in the agenda that addresses this question.